



Mr. Root's

FAST SERMON.

A

FAST SERMON

ON

S L A V E R Y .

DELIVERED

APRIL 2, 1835,

TO THE

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH & SOCIETY

IN

DOVER, N. H.

By DAVID ROOT, PASTOR.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE CHURCH.

DOVER:

PRINTED AT THE ENQUIRER OFFICE.

1835.

S E R M O N .

ISAIAH LVIII. 6.

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"

OUR excellent Governor in his proclamation appointing this day to be observed as a day of fasting and prayer, among other important matter, has recommended, that our supplications be offered in behalf of the oppressed, that "God would graciously unloose all heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free."

Taking occasion therefore from this item of the document, I propose to direct your attention at the present time, to the subject of oppression. It is one in which this nation, and every individual of this nation, ought to feel a deep and trembling interest. I do not suppose, my beloved hearers, that any of us, even those who have thought most and prayed most in reference to this subject, have any adequate conceptions of the extent to which it involves the destinies of this nation.

Slavery like an incubus presses upon the heart of this republic. It is a cancer fastened upon the vitals of this great community. It is evil and only evil and evil continually. It stirs the wrath of heaven, and if there be a God on high who legislates in righteousness, unless speedy repentance prevent, the days of this nation are nearly numbered and finished. No apology therefore is needed for introducing to your consideration this subject on the present occasion.

The words prefixed to this discourse are appropriate and in like manner lead us to the contemplation of the same subject.—The prophet by inspiration is teaching us what is the kind of fast of which God accepts and approves. "Is not this the fast that I

have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke."

This is the way then in which God would have us fast, not merely to afflict our souls, but to nerve up our minds to works of mercy and be ready to put forth actual and efficient efforts in behalf of the oppressed.

But let us understand what slavery is. In the words of our text, the bands of slavery are called bands of wickedness, because slavery is sin. To this point then let us first attend.

1. Slavery is sin. The testimony of the scriptures in reference to this point is sufficiently clear and decisive. They condemn every species of oppression. Unjust men and extortioners are by the law of the Eternal excluded from heaven. For it is written, "the hope of unjust men perisheth." But no injustice so flagrant as slavery. And again, it is written, "neither thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor *extortioners*, shall inherit the kingdom of God." But no extortion so foul as that of slavery. It takes not only all that a man hath, but for the want of more, it extorts body and soul.

We have no right to keep back the wages of those who serve us. "The laborer is worthy of his hire." To withhold payment, because we have the power to do so, is gross fraud. And hence says the apostle, "Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which of you is kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth." Slavery keeps back every thing. The slave holder compels his fellow man by violence to serve him without any remuneration whatever. The slave owns nothing, not even the rags on his back, not even his flesh and limbs. The master claims to own his body and soul, and for the sake of gain, taxes his bones and muscles to any extent he pleases.

There are parts of the Old Testament, which by some persons have been interpreted as favoring slavery, particularly, what is said of Abraham's servants. But Abraham's servants were not slaves. They were *trained* or *educated* servants, or dependants, who went with him to battle, who fought side by side with him, and who shared with him the spoils of victory.

Truly, there is a law in the Old Testament which recognizes slavery, but recognizes it as a crime, a foul crime, a capital crime. "He that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death." Suffice it to say, there is not an instance of involuntary servitude justified in the Old Testament, except in cases where it was required by God as a punishment for sin. This declaration is not made unadvisedly. We repeat, there is no instance of involuntary servitude justified in the Old Testament but as a punishment for sin.

Moreover, what lesson do we learn upon this subject from the history of the Egyptian bondage? That bondage was comparatively light. It was only tributary. Under that bondage, the Israelites not only owned themselves, but they had possessions, property; for when they went out of Egypt, they took with them their flocks, their herds, and their little ones. And yet comparatively light as it was, it provoked the wrath of heaven, and God exhibited judgment after judgment of the most fearful character, until he effectually "brake the arm of the oppressor and let the oppressed go free."

But let us continue our examination. And what may we gather in relation to this subject from the instructions of the New Testament? Why, masters are commanded to "give unto their servants," or those who serve them, "that which is just and equal." Now, it will be perceived at once, that this passage condemns slavery altogether; for let masters obey this precept and give unto those who serve them that which is just and equal, that is, wages, fair wages, (and nothing less than this can be accounted just and equal) and slavery ceases. Such servants thus compensated are no longer slaves. For it is impossible to hold servants as slaves, as property, and yet give unto them that which is just and equal. The very position involves a gross inconsistency and absurdity.

But are not servants commanded to be obedient unto their masters? They are indeed. But that command furnishes no justification of slavery. Those who serve should obey those who are to be served. The injunction is wise and proper. If you were to employ a servant, a laborer, a mechanic, or one to serve you in any capacity, and he refused to follow your instructions, would that be right? Surely not. Those who serve should observe the directions of their employers. But servants are not slaves. The original word *douloi* does not necessarily signify slaves. And the connexion in which it is most frequently found in the New Testament, shews that it does not. Take two or three examples. Paul is frequently called a servant of Jesus Christ. But Paul was not the slave of Jesus Christ. "Behold my servant whom I have chosen." But that Christ was the slave of God the Father is an impious thought. Joshua was the servant of Moses, Elisha of Elijah, Gehazi of Elisha, and all the apostles were the servants of Jesus Christ, but not the slaves of Jesus Christ. Our Saviour says, "where I am there shall also my servants be." But the servants of Christ are not his slaves. Instances of this kind are exceedingly numerous. The word servant then, in its ordinary acceptation, does not signify a slave, but one who serves, one who is employed to do service. And in this sense it is evidently to be taken in those passages in which servants are required to be obedient to their masters.

But was not Onesimus a runaway slave whom Paul sent back to Philemon his master? No, my hearers, we deny the position that he was a slave. He was a *servant*, and in some way probably bound to do Philemon service, and had perhaps failed of fulfilling his engagements, and hence Paul says to Philemon, "if he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that to mine account," which could not properly be said in regard to a slave. A slave being himself property can own nothing, nor can he properly be said to owe him by whom he is owned. He cannot owe his owner. To suppose then that Onesimus was a slave is gratuitous and contrary to evidence. Besides, if he had been a slave, it seems hardly probable that Paul would have sent him back, as he was forbidden to do so by the Mosaic law, which forbade any Israelite to give up the slave who had escaped to him. Paul however sent him back to be received, "not even as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved." Whether therefore he were a slave or not, no justification of slavery can be found in this transaction.

And look for one moment, I beseech you, my hearers, at the consequences of supposing that Paul justified slavery. If Paul justified slavery, then he justified the principle, that power gives right to enslave. And upon this principle, if I am the stronger, I have only to exercise my power and by violence reduce you to vassalage, in order to furnish myself with a just claim to your uncompensated services. For the slave holder retains his victim by no better right, and by no other right, than that of brute force.

Adopt this principle then, and you necessarily justify the very worst forms of tyranny and despotism that ever curst the world. Adopt this principle extensively, and the consequences would be absolutely horrible. Adopt this principle, and Pharaoh was innocent. Nero was mild and merciful. The exorbitant demands of the mother country upon her American Colonies, if she could have carried her points, would have been just and right. Indeed, no Jacobin of the French revolution ever justified a more dangerous doctrine than this. Robespierre would have blushed to own such a doctrine. The very devils would be ashamed to acknowledge the principle that power gives right to oppress.—Power gives right!! Why, there are no forms of crime which it would not sanction. And no language, of course, can express the abhorrence which we ought to feel toward such a principle.

Let us beware then, how we slander that generous minded apostle by intimating that he justified slavery. O, if Paul himself were present, with what just indignation would he repel the slanderous imputation? I Paul justify slavery? I who taught and enforced the benevolent plan of the Gospel, and how ye ought "to do justice and love mercy,"—"to render to all their

dues,"—to those who serve you, "that which is just and equal"—I who taught you that the law was made for *manstealers* as well as for liars and perjured persons? I justify slavery? I who enforced the great law of love? God forbid!

My hearers, no man feels that slavery is right. No man is willing to be a slave. Liberty is dear. All men love it, and would sooner fight for it than for any other object on earth. Uninfluenced by interest or prejudice all men condemn slavery. If there be one instinctive sentiment in the human breast, it is that slavery is wrong.

But contemplate, for a moment, some general principles of moral action recognized by the word of God. The scriptures specify few crimes. They advance general principles from which we are to gather lessons of duty.

The eighth commandment says, "thou shalt not steal."—What is it to steal? It is to take clandestinely that which belongs to another. What is it to rob? It is to take by force that which belongs to another. By what name then shall we call the crime of him who takes by force, not only what belongs to another, but takes by force that other's own self, body and soul, makes him a prisoner for life, and for mercenary purposes taxes his bones and muscles to the utmost extent of which they are capable, every day and every hour, to the last moment of his mortal existence. By what name, I ask, shall we call this crime? To call it robbery would be inadequate and tame. He who by violence attempts to efface from his fellow man the image of God, by making him a beast of burden, perpetrates a crime for which the vocabulary of our language furnishes no adequate name. It is the most flagrant violation of the eighth commandment which can be conceived.

Consider also the golden rule of our Saviour, "Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you." If you then, an innocent man, were in unjust and cruel bondage, what would be reasonable for you to ask and expect of those who held you thus? Certainly it would be reasonable for you to ask and expect that your yoke be immediately broken and that you go free. Suffice it to say, no man who holds his fellowman as property does by him as he would be done by. In every such instance the golden rule of the Saviour is violated. For no slaveholder would willingly be treated as he treats his victim. Would he be willing to be robbed every day of his just earnings, to be kept in utter ignorance, to be subjected to the caprice and cruelty of an irresponsible individual, to be brutized and held merely as beasts of burden? I need not answer.

But let us for a moment contemplate the bands of wickedness with which our colored countrymen are bound, and the heavy burden which they are made to bear, and see if we have not just

occasion to fast and pray, and be humbled before God on account of our iniquitous oppressions. Look at slavery then as it exists in these United States.

What is it? To show you what is its true aspect, allow me to present you with the following summary gathered from the slaveholding laws of the South. It is principally an abstract from that part of Mrs Child's Appeal which treats of this subject.

1. "Slavery is hereditary and perpetual to the last moment of the slave's earthly existence, and to all his descendants, to the latest posterity.

2. The labor of the slave is compulsory and uncompensated, while the kind and amount of labor are dictated solely by the master. No bargain is made, nor wages given. A pure despotism governs the human brute.

3. The slave being considered a personal chattel may be sold or exchanged for other commodities or used in any other way like any other piece of property; may be sold at auction either individually or in lots to suit the purchaser. Of course he may be separated from his family forever.

4. Neither a slave nor free colored person can in any case be a witness against any white or free man in any court of justice, but may give testimony against a fellow slave or free colored man. The slave may be punished at his master's discretion without trial and without any means of redress.

5. The slave whether male or female is not allowed to resist any white or free man under any circumstances. Any, the least resistance, even to defend chastity, may prove fatal.

6. The slave is entirely unprotected in his domestic relations.

7. The whole power of the laws is exerted to deprive the slaves of moral and religious instruction, and to keep them in the lowest state of ignorance and degradation.

8. There is a monstrous inequality of law and right. What is a trifling offence in a white man, is punished in the negro with death."

Surely, Roman slavery, in point of severity and cruelty, bare no comparison with this. The slave laws of the South, like the laws of Draco, are written in blood. There is a law in Louisiana which in effect, makes it a capital offence for any white man to read the Bible in the presence of a slave or colored person. This law enacts, in substance, that if any person shall read, say or do any thing, by signs or in any other way, calculated to make the slave discontented with his condition, he shall be liable, &c.

Now it is plain, that the words of our text, read in the presence of a slave, would be calculated to make him feel discontented, and of course, would subject the individual who should do so, to the penalty in question.

But allow me to give you another definition of slavery, the

definition of a southern clergyman, the Rev. Robert Breckenridge of Baltimore.

"What then is slavery?" asks he, in a public discussion on the subject, "for the question relates to the action of certain principles upon it, and to its probable and proper results; what is slavery as it exists among us? We reply, it is that condition enforced by the laws of one half the states of this confederacy, in which one portion of the community, called masters, is allowed such power over another portion called slaves; as

1. To deprive them of the entire earnings of their own labor, except only so much as is necessary to continue labor itself by continuing healthful existence, thus committing clear robbery.

2. To reduce them to the necessity of universal concubinage, by denying to them the civil rights of marriage; thus breaking up the dearest relations of life and encouraging universal prostitution.

3. To deprive them of the means and opportunities of moral and intellectual culture, in many states making it a high penal offence to teach them to read, thus perpetuating whatever of evil there is that proceeds from ignorance.

4. To set up between parents and children an authority higher than the impulse of nature and the laws of God; which breaks up the authority of the father over his offspring, and at pleasure separates the mother at a returnless distance from her child; thus abrogating the dearest laws of nature; thus outraging all decency and justice, and degrading and oppressing thousands upon thousands of beings created like themselves in the image of the Most High God. This is slavery as it is daily exhibited in every slave state."

If this be not oppression, and oppression of the most cruel character, then there can be no such thing as oppression. But oppression of every kind is condemned in the most severe and unmeasured terms by the word of God.

Slavery is also contrary to the genius of our government. The declaration of our independence recognizes all men as free and equal, possessing certain inalienable rights, as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. How odious in the sight of God must be the hypocrisy of reiterating such a declaration, and then, in the very teeth of that declaration, robbing two millions of our countrymen of the very rights we thus aver to be inalienable! Henceforth when that instrument is read, let shame cover us. Let every fourth of July remind us of our iniquitous hypocrisy, and instead of vain boastings of our country's freedom and glory, let us think of our guilt and our disgrace, and come before God with penitence and prayer, that the judgments, which by our cruel oppressions we have provoked and deserved, may be averted.

The toleration of slavery in this country is utterly at variance with our past policy, and involves our past proceedings as a na-

tion in gross inconsistency. By the war of the Revolution we said that all men are free and equal, and we stood to it at the peril of our lives and with the shedding of much blood. But by the toleration of slavery, we now practically say it is right for one class of men to reduce by violence another class to hopeless bondage.

The oppressed condition of the Greeks and Poles has in turn excited our commiseration, and we have to some extent put forth our efforts in their behalf; but when the cry of distressed, bleeding humanity has reached us from the Southern borders of our land, alas! alas! our ears we have closed, our hearts we have hardened, and our hands have refused to help. We have turned away with a cold and calculating indifference, and with the feelings of the Priest and the Levite we have passed by on the other side.

II. Let us now consider the duty and safety of immediate emancipation.

If slavery be a sin, which is manifest, than which nothing can be more manifest, then it ought to be repented of without delay; and immediate emancipation becomes the duty of the master and the right of the slave. Nothing short of such emancipation can be regarded as fruits meet for repentance. No man truly repents of his iniquity until he abandons it.

Is it sinful to hold our fellow men as property, as chattels, and thus degrade God's image? If it be, then he who does it, ought to cease from doing it at once.

Is it sinful to compel our fellow men by violence to toil for us and withhold from them that which is just and equal, thus committing clear robbery? If it be, then he who does it, ought to cease from doing it at once.

Is it sinful to abrogate the law of marriage and to encourage universal prostitution? If it be, then he who does it, ought to cease from doing it at once.

Is it sinful to exclude men from a knowledge of the word of God, and to keep them in ignorance of truth and duty, and thus to heathenize them? If it be, then he who does it ought to cease from doing it at once.

Is it sinful to set up between parents and children an authority higher than the impulse of nature and the laws of God, separating the father from his offspring and removing the mother forever from the child of her affections. If it be, then he who does it, ought to cease from doing it at once.

But the slave holder abets, encourages and participates in all this iniquity. You are ready then to say with me, that from such iniquity he ought to cease at once. You are then to all intents and purposes an immediate abolitionist. You say, that no man ought to hold his fellow man as property, that no man ought to rob his fellow man of his honest earnings, that no man ought to

encourage prostitution, that no man ought to exclude his fellow man from access to the Bible, and that no man ought to break up the authority of the parent over his child, and you say right. It is even so. But to cease from doing this is immediate emancipation.

But would immediate emancipation be safe? My hearers, what is right is always safe. What is agreeable to the will of God can never be unsafe. The plea of danger is the tyrant's plea, and utterly unworthy of patriotic, and christian men.

But let us look at the subject in view of probable consequences. Suppose the slaves of our country all emancipated at once, which is by no means probable, nor hardly possible. What evils would result? Would they rise and massacre their former masters as some persons have foolishly imagined? But they would have no motives to perpetrate such deeds of blood. Men do not act, especially in such a perilous and murderous enterprise, without motives. But in this case they could have no motive, but every consideration to dissuade them.

Moreover, if they would, they could accomplish no such purpose. The white men, even now, are two to their one in the Southern States, and the power is in their hands and would be for centuries to come. But I will not occupy your time in controverting an apprehension so utterly groundless and preposterous.

All history in relation to this subject shows, that immediate emancipation is entirely safe. The history of St. Domingo furnishes a most striking and happy illustration and proof of this position. It was not immediate emancipation which worked mischief and havoc and ruin there. Immediate emancipation produced the happiest results, and under its benign influence that Island rose as by enchantment to unwonted prosperity. But it was the base and tyrannical attempt of Napoleon, instigated by the mercenary aristocracy of the Island, to rivet again the chains of those who had for a moment tasted the sweets of freedom. It was this which wrought untold havoc and dyed her soil in a profusion of blood.

Those British West India Islands, where immediate emancipation has been recently effected, have been thus far entirely quiet, orderly, and prosperous.

We must not forget that emancipation from the tyranny of an irresponsible individual, is not an emancipation from law. The enslaved man, by being made free, is not emancipated from government and law. He is restrained from the perpetration of crime by the same laws which restrain other citizens. If he steal he will be imprisoned, if he murders he will be hung.

We have said that all history relating to this subject shews the safety of immediate emancipation. Those who pretend that immediate emancipation would be dangerous, ought to be able to ad-

duce one instance at least in which the consequences have been bad. But they cannot adduce one instance. We challenge them to specify one instance in which the consequences have been disastrous.

III. We are now prepared to consider some objections. And 1. It is said, if we agitate and urge on the subject of emancipation, we shall exasperate the South.

I suppose we shall exasperate a portion of the South, unprincipled men who are governed entirely by worldly motives, and who have little regard to justice and mercy, especially when their own interest is concerned. But there are christians, we trust, and men of principle at the South, who will be influenced by the truth. Such men *will* have regard to the dictates of reason, justice, and mercy. And suppose you do exasperate a class of oppressors, if it be the light of truth, if it be an exposure of their iniquity which offends them, how can it be avoided. We cannot but speak the things which we know of their oppressions, nor ought we to suppress the counsel of God on any subject. In short, we ought to "obey God rather than men." The honor of our Zion, the welfare of our country, and the happiness of our children, and children's children, are all deeply involved, and all urge us to speak out fearlessly on this subject.

Besides, it is impossible to assail long standing systems of iniquity without offending more or less their adherents; for by this craft they have their living, and mercenary men will not quietly relinquish their sources of gain, though ever so unjust.

When our Saviour assailed the iniquitous system of Judaism, the Jews sought to kill him, and did finally crucify him.

When Paul attempted to abolish idolatry and to plant christianity, it affected the interests of many, and they well nigh beat him to death.

When Stephen boldly declared the truth, the mobocracy rose upon him, and his fidelity cost him his life.

When Luther denounced the abominations of Popery and declaimed against the lucrative traffic of indulgencies, the clergy of that age, and others interested in keeping up the existing institutions, regarded him as a fire brand, a rabid agitator, and pounced upon him with unwonted bitterness. And if we now assail the iniquitous system of slavery, it will not be strange if many interested men should be exasperated.

But we have just as much right, and it is just as much our duty to expose the abominable system of slavery, as it is to tell idolaters that they should turn from the worship of idols to the service of the living God. Nor should we forbear, whatever opposition and persecution we may encounter. Did Jesus Christ forbear? Did the apostles hush up, when they were commanded by the civil authorities to teach and to preach no more ~~in~~ that

name? "Whether it were better to obey God or men, judge ye," said they. Did Luther quail when threatened with the horrors of the inquisition? No, being lawfully called to appear at the Diet of Worms on a certain occasion, he told his friends who endeavored to dissuade him, that he would go, "though as many devils as there are tiles on the houses were there combined against him."

2. Again. It is said, and they say, that we must not interfere with their domestic relations.

This is just as if one man should seize another by the throat and make him his prisoner, and when others attempted to interfere, should exclaim, stand off, gentlemen, stand off—beware how you interfere with my domestic relations. The truth is, the oppressors there, have got a certain class of our countrymen in their power, innocent men, and they are crushing them to death. They are driving the iron into their very souls, and now they say we must not interfere.

An hundred and fifty of our countrymen, while coasting along the Mediterranean, are captured by the pirates, and when we essay to effect their rescue, their oppressors say to us, stand off, stand off, you must not interfere with our domestic relations.

We challenge any man to shew that these are not parallel cases. We have just as much right to interfere in the one case as in the other. We affirm, that in every such case, it is our duty to interfere. The law of nature and the law of nations is violated, a law which all men have an interest in maintaining. The great and fundamental principle of duty and of right which lies back of all human constitutions and human arrangements, and which binds the moral world together, is outraged, a principle which all the universe are concerned to sustain.

3. But it is a political question. Yes, just as much as the question whether men ought to keep the ten commandments—just as much as the question whether the bible ought to be observed as the rule of our faith and practice,—just as much as the question whether men ought to be allowed to steal and rob, or not. If rulers encourage theft and robbery and oppose truth and righteousness, why then, we ought to withstand them, and with as much zeal and decision as did Nehemiah.

If political men and aspiring demagogues will drag this subject into political service and make use of it in their political manoeuvres, let the responsibility and the blame rest where they ought, but let not the cause of humanity suffer by such perversion.

4. But it will divide the union. Emancipation or the agitation of this subject, it is said, will divide the union.

The correctness of this position we deny. The prediction, we believe, is warranted neither by past experience nor by the nature of the case. Judging from past experience, if ever the

union is divided, slavery will divide it. Most of the jarring questions which have hitherto agitated the nation have originated in slavery.

Yes, my hearers, slavery has laid the foundation of nearly all the fierce political struggles which have heretofore marked the proceedings of our national legislature. The elements of the social condition of the North and South are so different, the inhabitants of the one section being entirely free, and those of the other divided into masters and slaves, that deep and irreconcilable collisions of interest must and will abound while slavery continues.—Slavery necessarily promotes feelings of rivalry and jealousy between the states. It naturally separates our interests, makes our councils discordant, and exerts an influence which jeopardizes our government. If ever the union is divided then, we predict, slavery will do it.

But if our union cannot be preserved but by fostering among us an odious system of oppression and cruelty and crime, provoking to God and disgraceful in view of the civilized world, it is as true as that there is a God, that nothing good can be preserved by crime.

5. But the slaves are held as property, and it would require a great sacrifice to emancipate them.

Why then are we told that slave holders regard their slaves as a burden and would be glad to get rid of them? The two things do not agree. If they are a burden, then it is no sacrifice to free them.

But allow that it would be a sacrifice and make some slave holders comparatively poor. Which has the paramount right, the slave to his freedom, or the master to the avails of his labor uncompensated? Is it not enough that the coloured man has toiled hitherto for nought? Is it not enough that our enslaved countrymen at the South have earned enough to purchase the soil a half a dozen times over? Shall we talk with pity of the hard case of the masters, and will any one tell us who will remunerate the slave for years of unrequited toil? Sober justice would say that he ought not to go out empty, but receive a fair compensation for his services; that he ought to have something to begin with; that he ought to be assisted, advised, and all needful helps afforded. The Hebrew who for some justifiable cause had been held to servitude for a term of years, at the expiration, was not to go out empty, but was to be liberally rewarded.

Allow it to be a sacrifice, the sacrifice is not so great by a hundred times, as multitudes in every age of the world, have been compelled to make for the cause of truth and righteousness.

When the Lord Jesus told the young man, that he must sell all and give to the poor, he thought it a great sacrifice. But it was on the whole right. In the outset of christianity, those who embraced it, suffered the loss of all things. Many, like Demetrius,

having their living by their idolatrous craft, were compelled to abandon it. The idolatrous books that were burnt, on one occasion, were worth forty thousand pieces of silver.

6. But the slaves are not fit for freedom and could not take care of themselves.

This is in perfect keeping with most other objections to their emancipation, a foul slander upon the character of the coloured man, as well as an insult added to injury. How is it then, that they have so long supported both themselves and their masters, and not only so, but under all their disabilities many of them have worked themselves free. By great industry and economy and shrewd calculation they have bought themselves, yes, bought themselves. (By the way, how it sounds to talk of men's buying themselves in this land of the free.) But in regard to their inadequacy to take care of themselves, allow me to adduce a fact. In Trinidad, in 1829, there were fifteen thousand free people of colour, and not a single pauper among them. Could the same be said, of fifteen thousand of our own population inhabiting any one town or section of country? I apprehend that there is less pauperism, in proportion, among the free people of colour than among the whites, even in this country, where as yet the blasting influence of prejudice crushes the black man and excludes him from every honorable and lucrative employment.

And suppose they are ignorant and depraved, who hath made them so? Why, your oppressive laws and cruel prejudice. In some of the slave holding states, to teach a coloured person to read is made a capital offence. And in no one of the Southern states are there any laws to protect the slaves in the right of marriage nor in their domestic relations. Indeed, the whole slave code of the South is framed with the specific design to depress and stultify the coloured man and to make him a beast of burden. And will you take advantage of your crime to justify your oppression? O, it is a horrid mockery, an intolerable insult to humanity, justice and reason, to make this plea.

No, my hearers, this plea of ignorance and incapacity will not answer. The very first step to prepare the slave for freedom is to *strike off* his chains, and thus remove the cause of his ignorance and degradation, otherwise his case is hopeless. And if their oppressors are disposed to do any thing for their benefit, let them do it afterward.

7. But it is an exciting subject. Yes, and thanks to God that it is. If it were not an exciting subject we should have no hope of their deliverance. Nothing but excitement in this case is likely to lead to appropriate action. Nothing but a strong sympathy will break through the barriers reared by self interest and cupidity and do any thing effectual to rescue the victims of oppressions. And the subject, surely, has claims to our sympathy. No man pos-
3

sing the common sensibilities of our nature, no man who deserves the name of a man, can contemplate the wrongs of this oppressed and deeply injured people without sentiments of heartfelt commiseration. My beloved hearers, I should have just occasion to suspect my own heart, if I could dwell on this subject and not find my inspiration in my theme. I plead for two millions of rational and immortal beings like yourselves. I plead for the sacred cause of liberty, a cause dear to every American heart. I plead for the common rights and privileges of our nature. I plead for the great law of love, that fundamental principle of duty which binds the moral universe together. I plead for the honor of my country and the glory of my God. I say to every friend of liberty, to every friend of Zion, to every friend of your country, cease, by your indifference and apathy on this subject, to provoke the judgments of heaven upon this guilty land. May the time never come when this shall cease to be an exciting subject. Be that day far distant. Wo, wo, wo to this land when the subject of liberty shall cease to excite the American bosom.

IV. Allow me in the next place to shew briefly what we can do and what we ought to do in behalf of the oppressed. Our text requires us to do *something*. "This is the fast that I have chosen, that ye break every yoke and let the oppressed go free."

But how is this to be done? This enterprise, my hearers, is to be carried on and accomplished by a kind but efficient moral influence. Now let us see what amount of moral influence may be brought to bear upon it. There are, in the United States, about seventeen thousand ministers of the gospel of different denominations. Now let us suppose, that there are somewhere between fifty and sixty professing christians to each minister, (which is not far from the truth) and we have about a million of christians besides the seventeen thousand ministers. Let us suppose farther, all these ministers and all these christians to be true to emancipation principles and appropriately sympathizing with the oppressed. Will any one believe, that the abominable system of slavery could continue ten years or even five years under this immense pressure of moral influence?

And have we not reason to conclude, that the period is not distant, when all these ministers, and all these christians, and all the friends of our country's weal, will heartily unite in the good work of breaking every yoke and letting the oppressed go free? Must not every enlightened gospel minister in the land perceive, that the toleration of slavery is the crimson and crying sin of this nation, that there is no hope of introducing the millennial glory of the church while this state of things continues, and that the hypocrisy of pretending to pity the heathen on the other side of the globe, while we have no bowels of compassion for the two millions of our countrymen who are legally and systematically shut out from the

light of life, must obstruct the wheels of every benevolent enterprise of the age, and eventually cover the friends of Zion with reproach? O, how fearful is the responsibility resting upon the ministers of the gospel in relation to this subject! The destinies of the coloured race in this land are at their disposal. If instead of conniving at this iniquity, they would rise in their moral might, and faithfully plead the cause of the oppressed, how soon would their chains fall off, and two millions of our benighted and injured countrymen stand forth emancipated, disenthralled, redeemed.

2. The subject of slavery must be agitated as we agitate the temperance, missionary, or any other benevolent cause. There is no good reason why this subject should be hushed up any more than that of other great and worthy enterprises of the age. The discussion of either is calculated to affect the minds of some persons unpleasantly. And this is to be expected in all attempts at moral reform.

3. We should be careful to embrace right principles in regard to this subject, the fundamental point being, that slavery is a sin which ought to be repented of, and that immediate emancipation is the duty of the master and the right of the slave.

4. Public sentiment at the North must be rectified, and an abolition atmosphere created, so that when Southerners visit us, they may go back deeply impressed with the duty and necessity of immediate emancipation, as some of our tourists now return from England.

5. Ministers and christians, and christian editors must cease to apologize for slavery by attempting to maintain its present expediency. They must utter the counsel of God on this subject, and not be reluctant to call things by their right names.

6. We must cease to cherish cruel prejudices against the people of colour. Our prejudice against colour neutralizes our sympathy for the slave, so that all our sympathy is for the slave holder, and we talk with emotion of his sacrifices, in case of emancipation, while the daily robbery committed on the slave is overlooked and not mentioned.

It is easy to perceive that if the slaves of the south were white, if they were Irishmen, Dutchmen, English, or any race resembling in complexion ourselves, such would be the sympathy enlisted in their behalf, that their emancipation would soon be accomplished. When a few of our countrymen are captured by the Algerine pirates and subjected to bondage, how it electrifies the whole nation! Plans are immediately put in requisition to deliver the captives, and to chastise the robbers.

Besides, to cherish this prejudice is an insult to God, "who hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth."

7. We must make direct efforts by petitioning Congress, and otherwise, for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia.

When our representatives and senators in Congress perceive that we are in earnest, and that public sentiment will sustain them, they will then proceed heartily to the work of emancipation.

8. We must give cheerfully of our substance to enlighten the public mind on this subject. We must circulate tracts, newspapers and other periodicals devoted to this object. We must form societies and in various other ways endeavor to enlist public sentiment in behalf of the oppressed. And it will not be long ere the wheels of emancipation will begin to roll to the astonishment of the incredulous and to the joy of the sanguine. Nothing is wanting but light, discussion, free inquiry into this subject. We are aware that desperate efforts have been made to suppress discussion and to silence inquiry. Wily politicians and unprincipled demagogues have called to their aid the mobocracy of the land. But the paroxysm of mobs is on the wane, and a redeeming spirit is going forth, collected and cool, but resolute and determined, and that will not sleep, until "liberty is proclaimed to the captive, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound."

V. I shall now conclude this protracted discourse by presenting some considerations which should urge us to action.

And 1. We are all either directly or indirectly implicated in this iniquitous system of oppression. Let no one suppose that the South alone are to be blamed. *We* are guilty. By our indifference, our connivance, and countenance, *we* have tolerated slavery. We have seen our coloured brother have need and we have shut up our bowels of pity from him; and if we repent not and bring not forth fruits meet for repentance, Christ will say to us in the day of final reckoning, "Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of these, my brethren, ye have not done it unto me."

2. It were better for the slave holder as well as for the slave, it were better for the whole country, if immediate emancipation were effected. To be convinced of this, you have only to contrast the productiveness and prosperity of the non-slaveholding states with the comparatively sterile and often blighted regions of slavery. You have only to contrast, in point of wealth, population and prosperity, the two States of Ohio and Kentucky as they stretch along side by side. Indeed the contrast is sufficiently striking as you sail down that beautiful river which divides them. On the one hand you will observe Ohio with her flourishing villages, well cultivated farms, and industrious, thrifty yeomanry, and on the other, Kentucky with her rather meager little towns, dilapidated buildings, poor negro huts, and comparatively unproductive plantations.

3. But again, by nourishing slavery in our bosom we exhibit an example of gross inconsistency and hypocrisy. Our boast of liberty is arrant mockery. Mourning and weeping, sackcloth and ashes would better become us.

Other nations have just occasion to inquire, and to inquire with astonishment, where is the famed moral influence of America, christian America, that land of bibles, of missionaries, of republican principles and free institutions, that she continues to cherish in her bosom that iniquitous system of slavery !

The truth is, our example, and consequently our influence, are all on the wrong side. They are on the side of tyrants and despots. And I fearlessly aver, that we are doing more to sustain the tyrant on his throne and the despot in his despotism—more to support the Holy Alliance—more to establish the divine right of Kings—more to favor principles of arbitrary power and persecution, than any other or than all other nations on the face of the globe. The tyrants and despots of other countries love to have it so. They point to America and tauntingly exclaim, there is your land of freedom with her two millions of slaves !

I say, we encourage persecution. We withhold the bible from our coloured countrymen by violence, and this is the worst kind of persecution.

How strange it is ! The missionary with the bible and other elements of knowledge in his hand, may go to almost every other country on the earth and be gratefully received by the inhabitants, and be encouraged to pour upon their minds the light of Revelation and the light of science, but when he comes to these two millions of our countrymen, he must close his bible, and muzzle his mouth, and lay aside his elements of knowledge. O, my beloved country ! thou paragon of inconsistency and hypocrisy—my beloved country, whither will thy crimes bear thee ! May thy timely repentance avert from thee the judgments which thy sins have provoked ! My hearers, what occasion have we to humble ourselves before God ?

4. The slave trade will never terminate but with the termination of slavery. The traffic in the bodies and souls of men, both foreign and domestic, *will* continue, until the demand for slaves ceases, and that demand will cease only with the abolition of slavery. And be it remembered, that in the eye of heaven, there is no difference between slave trading and slave holding. The abettor is criminal equally with the principal.

5. My hearers, if your souls were in their soul's stead—if you were shut out from all that makes life desirable or death comfortable—if you were chained down to one spot of earth and doomed to ceaseless toil by the iron hand of oppression, and not allowed to plead your own cause, what would you wish and expect us to do for you ? Would you not wish and expect us to urge on with all our might and influence your cause ? Well, beloved hearers, *they* cannot plead their own cause. They are muzzled and cannot speak—manacled and cannot lift the imploring hand—fettered and cannot go forth to tell the story of their wrongs. They ex-

pect us to plead for them ; and He who is the friend of the poor and oppressed expects us to plead for them. They are anxiously hoping, expecting, waiting for us. Their hearts cry out for deliverance, "How long, O Lord, how long?" when will the abolitionists come and their efforts be made effectual to our rescue? "As ye would then that others should do to you, do ye even so to them."

6. My hearers, it is not impossible but the tables may be turned at some future period not very remote, and they in turn have the ascendancy. In what attitude should we then be placed and what principles should we then advocate? You may think this a vain thought, but events less probable have transpired. Where is flourishing Tyre who once made merchandize of the souls of men? And where are many other nations whom God has plucked up and destroyed for their oppressions?

My hearers, I tremble, when, in connexion with the crimes of this country, I think that God is just. His patience must be nearly exhausted. In what way his judgments will come upon us, I pretend not to predict. That, without repentance, they will come and will not tarry, I have no more doubt than I have that I stand before you this day. If the coloured people of the South, multiplying as they do much faster than the whites, and being borne down with oppressions no longer to be endured, should eventually rise in their might and necessarily produce fearful havoc and ruin, it would be no more than we have justified by our declaration of independence; it would be no more than a righteous retribution at the hand of God.

The blacks are here and must remain here. If we do them justice and treat them kindly we may live together in amity and be of mutual benefit. But if we proceed to increase our despotism, and to rivet closer the bands of oppression, be assured, jealousy and revenge, and despair, on the part of this down-trodden people, those fearful elements, will ultimately complete the work of destruction, and God will rear something more acceptable on the ruins of this fallen nation. O, how earnestly should we pray that we may eschew the latter and pursue the former.